

# Melanoma

In the U.S., melanoma of the skin is the fifth most commonly diagnosed cancer in men, and sixth in women. Nationally, the number of new cases of melanoma has more than doubled in the past 20 years.

Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer. It is the most rapidly increasing form of cancer in the U.S., causing more than 75 percent of all deaths from skin cancer.

## Risk Factors

Some of the factors associated with an increased risk of developing melanoma are family or personal history of melanoma, dysplastic nevi, weakened immune system, a large number of ordinary moles (more than 50), ultraviolet radiation exposure, one or more severe blistering sunburns, and fair skin.

The chance of developing melanoma increases with age, but this disease affects people of all age groups and is one of the most common cancers in adults age 20 to 49.

In the U.S., rates are more than 10 times higher in whites than in blacks. Melanoma mortality is increasing slightly in white men, while it has stabilized among white women.

## Prevention

Protection from exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays appears to be the most effective way to prevent the development of skin cancer. Skin cancer is largely preventable when sun protective practices and behaviors are consistently used.

In Vermont, 59 percent of women routinely use sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) greater than 15, compared to 37 percent of men.

Because of the possible link between severe sunburns in childhood and greatly increased risk of melanoma in later life, children, in particular, should be protected from the sun.

## Screening

Experts do not agree whether to recommend routine screening for skin cancer by total skin examination. Generally, it is recommended that

people with risk factors talk with their physician about skin cancer, the symptoms to watch for, and a schedule for checkups.

## Other Skin Cancers

The two most common forms of skin cancer are basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma. Although more than a million new cases of these cancers are estimated to occur each year in the U.S., cancer registries do not routinely track them.

These highly curable cancers are usually treated in doctors' offices, and less than 1 percent are fatal.



## Vermont Melanoma Facts

*(based on data from 1995-1999)*

- Vermont's melanoma incidence rates are not statistically different from the U.S. SEER white rates.
- Each year, an average of 58 cases of melanoma are diagnosed in women, and 69 in men.
- An average of seven women and 13 men die from melanoma each year.
- The female melanoma mortality rate is 2.1 (1.4, 3.0) per 100,000 and the male rate is 4.6 (3.5, 6.0) per 100,000. These rates are not statistically different from the U.S. white rates of 2.0 for females or 4.4 for males.

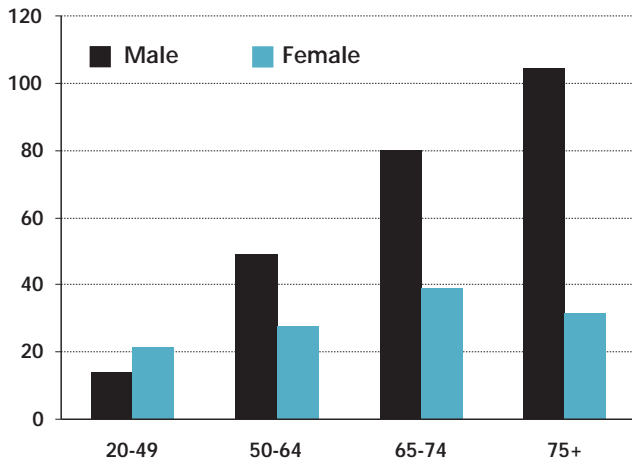
## Healthy Vermonters 2010 Objective

- Increase the percentage of people (age 18+) who use at least one protective measure to decrease their risk of skin cancer.

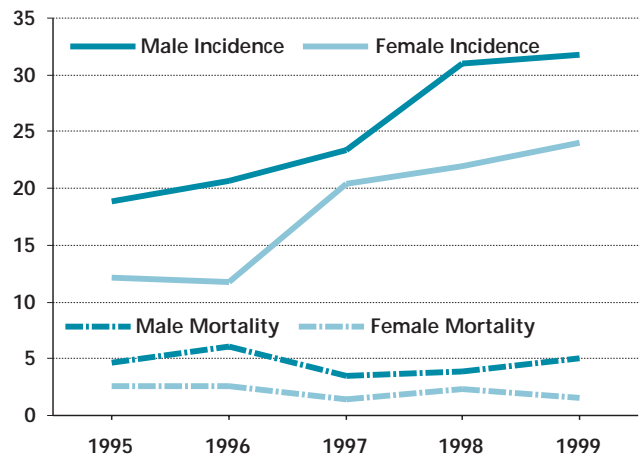
Goal: 75%      VT 2001: 76%

*(While Vermont has met the 2010 goal for the population as a whole, certain groups known to be at highest risk are not getting screened. For example, 71 percent of men take precautions compared to 80 percent of women.)*

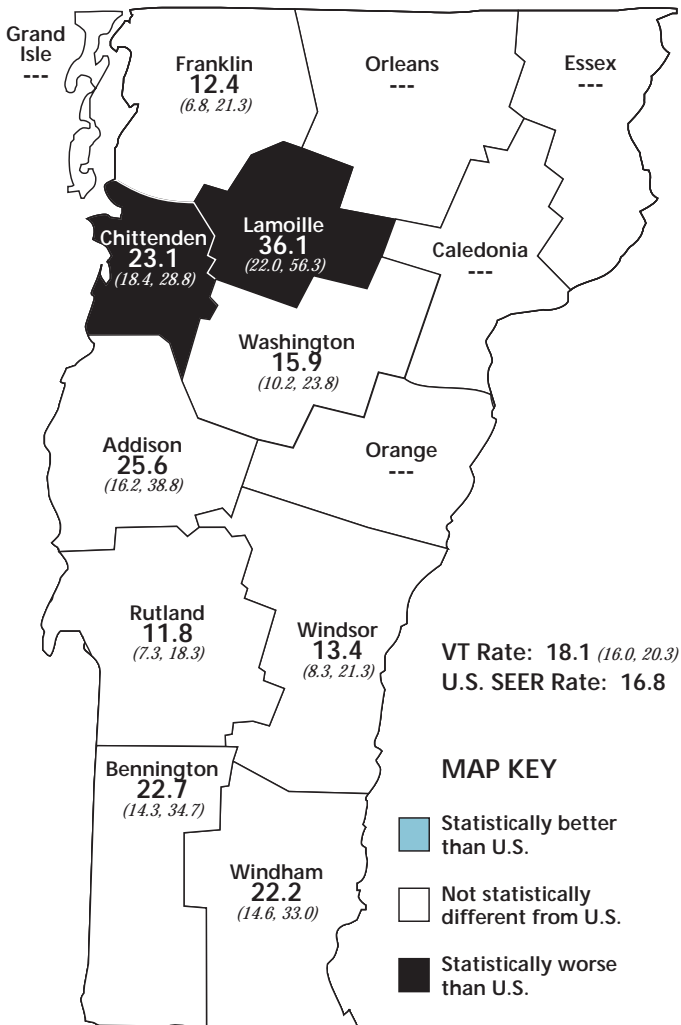
**Melanoma Incidence by Age at Diagnosis**  
per 100,000 Vermont males/females, 1995-1999



**Melanoma Incidence and Mortality**  
per 100,000 Vermont males/females



**Female Melanoma Incidence**  
Per 100,000 females (1995-1999)



**Male Melanoma Incidence**  
Per 100,000 males (1995-1999)

